

Preface

by Dr. Pedro LEON
Coordinator
President Aria's Initiative on Peace with Nature

The Central American landbridge is the home of many cultural and natural characteristic forms of life, melting influences of North- and South America. Since 3,5 mio years when the landbridge was closed, organisms migrate from the North to the South and vice versa, developing peculiar features in the different areas. The Golfo Dulce region, situated in the South of Costa Rica, is a very humid part of the country, where marine and terrestrial ecosystems unique to Central America evolved. They are home to around 2,5% of the Planet's biological diversity and still relatively unknown.

The Golfo Dulce forests received the attention of the scientific world surprisingly late. In the 1930s an Austrian Expedition under the direction of the botanist Dr. Otto Porsch visited the region and carried out pioneer work. Twenty years later, the American botanist Paul H. Allen (1956) described the vegetation and plant diversity in his remarkable book *The Rain Forests of Golfo Dulce*.

In 2001 Austrian botanists published, together with Costarican and US botanists, the "Introductory Field Guide to the Flowering Plants of the Golfo Dulce Region", a further step towards its biological understanding.

The present book is a compilation of recent scientific research results of natural and cultural aspects of this unique area, and shows the importance of conservation as well as the need and significance of corridors to maintain and improve its biological connectivity, biological corridors.

The region is economically and culturally very diverse and still in danger – conservation, oil palm plantations, tourism, marinas, overfishing, etc., which shows how development still has little understanding of the unique nature and the importance of conservation of this very fragile region.

Development should be made in a sustainable way and should consider both, the natural beauty and the ecological limitations in any area. We are sure this book will help to bring about an improvement of this understanding in the Golfo Dulce region, and thus help promote a more balanced human development process.



Dr. Pedro Leon